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Report of the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women on its eighteenth session

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I. Matters brought to the attention of the Economic And Social Council

1. At its eighteenth session, the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) endorsed the report of the Strategic Planning Committee on its fifth session (INSTRAW/BT/1998/CRP.1).

2. The Board expressed deep concern about the decreasing financial base of the Institute.

3. The Board took note of the progress report on the implementation of the Institute's activities for 1997. While recognizing the efforts made by INSTRAW staff during the year, the members of the Board concluded that the overall level of output of the Institute had not met their expectations. The Board also expressed confidence in the management's new vision for the future.

4. The Board approved the organization of a brainstorming workshop to review and further develop INSTRAW's new conceptual framework for the advancement of women and gender equality, as set out in document INSTRAW/BT/1998/R.3.

5. The Board welcomed the interest and readiness of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to cooperate closely in INSTRAW programmes.

6. The Board approved the research and training programmes as revised, under agenda item 7, and indicated that priority should be granted to subprogrammes one and two.

7. The Board approved the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, as amended. Noting the difficulties imposed on INSTRAW by its current financial situation and the limitations of human resources, the Board was of the view that there was a need for flexibility in the management of resources and programmes on the part of the Director. Accordingly, the Board recommended that all decisions regarding the functions of the Liaison Office in New York be left to the judgement of the Director.

8. The Board endorsed the conclusions of the Ad Hoc Working Group and made relevant recommendations, which were considered under agenda item 8 (see para. 96 below).

9. The Board expressed its position on the future of the Institute in the following statement:

> "The Board of Trustees of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), at its eighteenth session, stresses the importance of the autonomous status of the Institute, as is set out in article I of its Statute.
>
> "The Board notes with satisfaction the recent appointment of a Director for the Institute for a two-year period. Under her direction, it is expected that the visibility of INSTRAW in United Nations affairs will improve through its research and training. Together with the Board, the Director is also expected to undertake fund-raising activities in order to increase the income of INSTRAW's Trust Fund.
>
> "The Director has also made the commitment to actively encourage and promote inter-agency collaboration in carrying out the mandate of INSTRAW.
>
> "Given this situation, the Board of Trustees reiterates its position that the autonomous status of INSTRAW should be maintained, and would call upon the Economic and Social Council to recommend this for adoption by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session."

10. The Board heard a statement made by the President of the Staff Association and agreed that the statement should be included in the report on its eighteenth session (see the annex below).

11. The Board strongly agreed to the proposal that the staff should receive compensation under the terms set forth by the United Nations Controller (see para. 101 below).

II. Report of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting

12. At its 1st meeting, under agenda item 4, the Board discussed the outcome of the fifth session of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). The item was introduced by Els Postel-Coster, on behalf of the Committee. In considering the item, the Board had before it document INSTRAW/BT/1998/CRP.1.

13. In introducing the report of the Strategic Planning Committee, Ms. Postel-Coster informed the Board that the main focus of the deliberations of the Committee was the financial crisis affecting the Institute. In that regard, the Committee stressed that the Institute should not rely only on its traditional donors, given that their contributions to the INSTRAW Trust Fund fluctuated. As a result, it was imperative that the Institute identify alternative sources of funds. In the light of the Institute's dire financial situation,

the Committee expressed concern about the staffing situation of the Institute.

14. In addition, the Committee stressed the need to increase the visibility of INSTRAW and in that regard recommended that the Liaison Office in New York continue in its present form, so as to maintain contact with donors and establish other relevant forms of cooperation. The possibility of opening an office in Europe could be considered in the future, provided financial resources became available. One Board member noted that INSTRAW was not well known in the European Union and that an office in that region would increase the Institute's visibility. The Director responded that while some Member States were not keen to pledge contributions to the INSTRAW Trust Fund, it was highly likely that they could be in a position to grant earmarked contributions for the establishment of such liaison offices. She added that INSTRAW could prepare project proposals to be presented to donors.

15. The Committee reviewed the recommendation contained in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services regarding the question of the merger. It expressed concern that the Institute's mandate and autonomy be safeguarded, in accordance with its statutes.

16. Several Board members expressed their deep concern about the decreasing financial base of the Institute and the need to discuss the matter further. Several Board members stated that the Board should take an active role in identifying a funding strategy for the Institute and that a committee should be established for that purpose. The representative of the regional commissions reminded the Board that, in 1991, when SPC was established, a Finance Committee was also established. She noted that subsequently the two committees were merged and that SPC had not been able to devote appropriate time and effort to addressing the financial issues involved. Hence, the Financial Committee could be now reactivated. The representative of the Secretary-General drew the Board's attention to General Assembly resolution 52/95, in which the Assembly requested that a sound financial base be developed for the Institute. In that regard, she suggested that a working group be formed to assist the Institute in that task. After some discussion, the Board agreed that an Ad Hoc Working Group be established to assist the Institute in identifying and implementing measures to increase the resource base of the Institute. Several Board members stressed that the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group should continue beyond the current session of the Board. Board members should be prepared to act as advocates and spokespersons for INSTRAW on an ongoing basis. The following Board members were elected to the Ad Hoc Working Group: Zakia Bouaziz, Mona Khalaf, Norica Nicolai, Els Postel-Coster, and Glenda Simms. The representative of the regional commissions and the Executive Officer of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat would provide advisory assistance to the Working Group.

17. Within this context, a few fund-raising suggestions were expressed. These included: (a) the Board could strengthen lobbying efforts with ministers, as well as prominent sources in the private sector; (b) the Board could assist in fund-raising for earmarked contributions on the basis of proposals prepared by the Institute; and (c) the Institute could conduct gender training for the United Nations system and other organizations. The Institute should also strive to establish collaborative and coordinated programmes with other United Nations entities and research organizations in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to make optimal use of resources. One Board member noted that there was much demand for gender training and that many donors funded activities in that area.

18. Considering that the Institute did not have the financial resources to fund fellows, the representative of the Secretary-General suggested that countries might be able to sponsor fellows to come to INSTRAW. Thus the human resource base and research capacity of the Institute could be enhanced. Another Board member stated that the Institute's network of focal points should be strengthened, but that clear guidelines regarding the expectations of the relationship needed to be established.

19. The representative of the Secretary-General suggested that the functions and staffing of the Liaison Office in New York be considered within the overall staffing needs of the Institute.

20. On the recommendation of the Strategic Planning Committee, the Board approved the following new members of the Committee:

President: Esther Ashton (Bolivia)

Vice-President: Maria Jonas (Austria)

Members: Selma Acuner (Turkey)
Zakia Bouaziz (Tunisia)
Amarylllis Torres (Philippines)
A representative of the regional commissions

III. Progress report on the activities of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women for 1997

21. At the 2nd meeting, under agenda item 5, the Director of INSTRAW introduced the progress report on the implementation of the Institute's activities for 1997 (INSTRAW/BT/1998/R.2 and Add.1), which covered the period January to December 1997. In her presentation, the Director highlighted the most salient aspects of the report.

22. The Director explained that, during the period under review, vacancy announcements had been circulated for a number of key posts, namely P-5 (Senior Programme Officer), P-4 (Chief, Information, Communication and Documentation Unit), P-3 (Chief Administrative Officer), P-3 (Social Affairs Officer, Research and Training Unit). These positions had not been filled owing to the unavailability of selected candidates or the unavailability of a suitable candidate. Moreover, two staff members (at the P-3 and G-7 levels) had left the Institute during the year. The post of Director (D-2), however, had been filled on 16 October 1997.

23. The Director said that the report of the Board of Trustees on its seventeenth session had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1997. At its resumed organizational session, the Council had appointed five distinguished women as members of the Board of Trustees for a three-year term, beginning on 1 July 1997 and expiring on 30 June 2000. At the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, before the Third Committee, the Director had introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of INSTRAW (A/52/352). On the recommendation of the Third Committee, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 52/95, in which it requested the Director of INSTRAW to develop a funding strategy and to establish a link between the activities of the Institute and its resource base; the Assembly also expressed concern about the declining resource base of the Institute, and invited Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund of the Institute to enable it to respond effectively to its mandate.

24. The Director stated that during the period under review the Liaison Office in New York, in addition to carrying out its liaison functions, had represented the Institute at some relevant United Nations meetings; provided logistical and administrative backstopping to administrative work of the Institute; and assisted the Director and the former Acting Director during their missions to New York.

25. Turning to the substantive implementation of research and training programmes, the Director drew the attention of the Board to table 1 contained in document INSTRAW/BT/1998/R.2/Add.1. The table provided a summary of the status of implementation of substantive programmes set out in the programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997. Six outputs had been completed, three were ongoing and eight had not been implemented. Table 2 indicated that of a total allotment of US$ 499,000 for the substantive programmes for the biennium 1996-1997, US$ 212,895 had been spent, leaving a balance of US$ 286,105.

26. In November 1997, INSTRAW organized a "Brainstorming/coordination session on global trends in gender and development". Its objectives were to discuss emerging trends and to identify research priorities and gaps in gender and development. Five consultants participated in the meeting and prepared overviews of the research gaps in their specific areas of interest and expertise. The sessions and the corresponding papers provided useful inputs for the preparation of INSTRAW's proposed programme of work.

27. With regard to inter-agency cooperation and collaboration, the Director informed the Board that during the year INSTRAW had participated in relevant meetings in the areas of environment and sustainable development, water supply and sanitation, energy, and statistics. It had participated actively in the WomenWatch project, a joint initiative of INSTRAW, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, and UNIFEM, which consists of a joint Internet site that serves as a gateway to information on women and development issues within the United Nations system and has links to relevant non-governmental organizations. INSTRAW had also participated in the sessions of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and in meetings on technical cooperation among developing countries.

28. The Director informed the Board that three interns had participated in the internship programme in the Liaison Office in New York. In addition, she mentioned that a former intern had been given a short-term assignment from January to June 1997 to attend and report on various meetings. The internship programme at INSTRAW headquarters had remained inactive during the period under review owing to the lack of the substantive staff necessary to supervise and monitor the work of interns.

29. The Director stated that although the post of Chief, of the Information, Communication and Documentation Unit remained vacant during the period, all the activities undertaken by the Unit had been completed. Among the major publications produced and distributed were (a) the proceedings of the round table held at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II); (b) a catalogue of INSTRAW publications; (c) *INSTRAW News* Nos. 24/25 and 26, in three languages; and (d) four public information brochures. INSTRAW also carried out public information activities in both the host country and New York.

30. The Director informed the Board that the focal points had been kept abreast of INSTRAW activities through various documents published by the Institute. In November 1997, INSTRAW and its focal point in Ecuador co-sponsored a national colloquium entitled "Women and the management of water resources in situations of disaster".

31. She pointed out that INSTRAW provided substantive inputs and attended various meetings and events organized by governmental and non-governmental institutions, as well as international entities in the host country.

32. With regard to administration and programme support, the Director explained that although the post of Chief Administrative Officer remained vacant, the Institute's management had discharged the principal functions of the post. Upgrading of the Institute's automation system and software had begun in order to provide equipment that could better respond to INSTRAW's database demands. This entailed the acquisition and installation of 10 high-capacity computers to provide all units with e-mail and Internet access. In addition, new equipment was acquired for the printing shop to improve the level and quality of INSTRAW's printed outputs. Training was provided to staff members in order to ensure the best utilization of the equipment and software acquired.

33. As in previous years, the Institute participated in the 1996 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities. It received pledges from Member States in the amount of $448,243; as of the date of the present report, the total amount of contributions received by the Institute for 1997 amounted to $770,720. At the 1997 Pledging Conference, held in November, INSTRAW received promises of contributions for 1998 in the amount of $371,679. It was imperative that the Institute's financial situation be carefully addressed and that intense fund-raising endeavours be undertaken in order to provide the Institute with a level of funding that would allow the implementation of the substantive activities that INSTRAW was expected to undertake during the forthcoming biennium. In conclusion, the Director reiterated that INSTRAW appreciated the valuable support of the Member States that had contributed to the Trust Fund since its inception.

34. At the request of the Board of Trustees, a staff member provided detailed information on the status of the research and training programmes for the biennium 1996-1997. Reasons for not completing the programmes included lack of sufficient staff, as well as lack of management decisions and guidance. In addition to presenting the status of programmes, the staff member made a brief presentation on the INSTRAW manual *Women on the Net*. A preliminary version of the manual is already on-line.

35. Some Board members sought further clarification on two project proposals submitted for funding from Mr. Ted Turner's donation to the United Nations. The Director explained that due to time constraints, the Institute was unable to prepare new project proposals. Instead, two previously prepared proposals falling within the framework of the United Nations International Partnership Trust Fund had been revised and submitted.

36. One Board member stated that the limited financial resources of the Institute should be used efficiently and reallocated in line with its new vision. She added that adequate funding should be allocated to improve visibility, through participation at selected conferences and meetings. Furthermore, she observed that lack of funds was not the only reason for under-implementation of the programmes. It seemed to be due also to problems of management as well as of understaffing, problems which needed to be seriously addressed.

37. Another Board member pointed out that INSTRAW should focus on research management, rather than carrying out its own research. She suggested that through the use of computer technologies, a global database could be developed. In addition, INSTRAW could undertake computer-assisted global research and regional comparative studies.

38. Clarification was sought by one Board member on the Institute's use of e-mail and the impact of INSTRAW's Home Page in relation to the overall communication costs of the Institute. A staff member explained that e-mail communications had significantly reduced INSTRAW's communication costs.

39. Another Board member wanted to know why the interns at the Liaison Office in New York all came from one country. In response, the Director explained that, since the internship programme operated at no cost to the Institute,

participation was limited to those who could afford it. However, certain measures were being initiated to enable students from other regions to apply and undertake internships at both headquarters and the Liaison Office.

40. A question was raised regarding the recently acquired equipment in the print shop. In response, a staff member described the equipment that had been purchased and the current status of the print shop equipment. The representative of the Secretary-General informed the Board that other organizations of the United Nations system had been using the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin for their printing needs. INSTRAW might wish to consider that option.

41. One Board member suggested that specific information on INSTRAW's representation at various meetings, including the funding source of its participation, should be provided in the progress report. Another Board member suggested that the progress report contain clear information regarding the outcome of programmes and follow-up action, as well as limitations and reasons for not completing the outputs for each programme. That would provide a realistic and concrete overview of the progress of the projected activities. She added that the progress report should not contain detailed information on attendance at various conferences and meetings, as these could not be considered outputs of the research programmes. She further suggested that the Board members provide information to the Institute on activities in their regions.

42. While recognizing the efforts made by the INSTRAW staff during the previous year, the Board members concluded that the Institute's overall level of output had not met their expectations. However, the Board was satisfied that the new direction approved at the eighteenth session had set the Institute on the right track.

IV. INSTRAW strategy for the new millennium

43. At its 2nd and 3rd meetings, under agenda item 6, the Board considered the INSTRAW strategy for the new millennium. The Board had before it document INSTRAW/BT/1998/R.3.

44. In introducing the item, the Director explained the evolving nature of the draft document under discussion. She added that the draft needed further consideration in order to be developed as basic reference material for INSTRAW and subsequently a contribution to the Women in Development (WID) literature. She pointed out that the preparation of the document was motivated by the fact that INSTRAW's invaluable contributions over the years had not been sufficiently reflected in relevant debates or policy guidelines, among other things. Hence, the Institute considered it necessary to make a comprehensive assessment of its role in the efforts towards the advancement of women, which resulted in a new analytical and operational framework to guide its activities in the new millennium.

45. The new strategy departs from the Institute's previous programme orientation of four pre-defined areas and now focuses on the theme of advancement of women, which is perceived as a process of empowerment, emancipation and gender equality. This process is a complex one requiring different forms and levels of intervention, including, *inter alia*, meeting women's immediate needs, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practice, creating gender awareness and sensitivity; accounting for women's unpaid work; increasing women's access to decision-making, productive work and resources; enhancing women's capacity to expand their space in private and public life; supporting the empowerment of women; and changing unequal gender structures to achieve sustainable gender equality. To assist the conceptualization of this process, the Institute has developed the concept of transformatory empowerment, which draws a distinction between empowerment as capacity-building to cope within the existing gender structures, and empowerment as capacity-building to transform existing gender-biased structures. The latter, transformatory empowerment, can then lead to women's emancipation and gender equality.

46. The Director further elaborated upon the role of INSTRAW in linking top-down policies and practices with bottom-up demands and needs of women individually and collectively. Thus, INSTRAW's catalytic role in this regard would draw on its research, training and advocacy activities. For this purpose she informed the Board that the operational framework consists of four levels of interrelated but distinct activities: policy formulation, networking and coordination, implementation and dissemination.

47. Many Board members welcomed the new approach to the advancement of women as presented in document INSTRAW/BT/1998/R.3 and congratulated the Director for having taken that initiative. Some Board members expressed their desire to continue discussion on the new methodological and conceptual framework for INSTRAW, especially on how it related to the operational framework of the Institute, in order to clarify and reinforce the link between the two. In this regard, some suggestions were put forward to separate the conceptual from the operational part of the document.

48. Regarding the overall objective of the new strategy's conceptual framework, several suggestions were made by members of the Board. One proposed that women's advancement and transformatory empowerment be considered from a multicultural perspective, so as to make it applicable to all women, notwithstanding their racial, cultural and social characteristics. Another suggestion was to give due consideration to race, class and cultural aspects of societies when approaching the deconstruction of masculinity, especially when this was translated into practice. It was further suggested that the concept of social relationship be used rather than the concept of patriarchal gender structures when analysing relations between men and women.

49. Concerning the operational framework, several Board members made proposals aimed at strengthening the logical links between different issues and concepts and their implementation. These included: (a) reflecting the complex interaction between bottom-up and top-down approaches in the link between the Institute's strategy and operations, thereby requiring an interactive model; (b) defining the Institute's operations with concrete outputs and a time framework; (c) strengthening inter-agency cooperation in the planning and implementation of programmes as well as with respect to focal points; and (d) promoting collaboration and coordination among different research institutes and organizations.

50. After congratulating the Director for the formulation of the new strategy, the representative of the Secretary-General suggested that an inter-agency workshop be held, at which the implications of this new theoretical paradigm on gender equality might be further discussed. Several Board members welcomed the suggestion, and the nature and organization of the workshop were discussed. It was suggested that the theoretical part of the strategy document be prepared as a working paper for the workshop. After the meeting, it could be adapted for publication. It was further suggested that the proposed workshop would serve to identify the practical policy implications and tools of the conceptual approach to the advancement of women as developed by the Institute.

51. The Board agreed that a brainstorming workshop on conceptual frameworks should be organized by INSTRAW in collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the regional commissions during the last quarter of 1998 (tentatively scheduled for mid-November). The aim of the workshop is to review and further develop the conceptual framework for the advancement of women and gender equality currently promoted by the various United Nations entities. Five external experts and one or two members of the Board will also participate in the workshop.

52. INSTRAW will submit a revised version of its conceptual framework as contained in the first part of document INSTRAW/BT/1998/R.3 for discussion at the workshop, as will each of the other participating entities. The final proceedings will be submitted to governing bodies of INSTRAW, UNIFEM and UNDP and will also be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women at its session in 1999.

53. INSTRAW will host the workshop at its headquarters and provide the necessary conference services and logistical support. The other co-sponsors should be requested to contribute between US$ 5,000 and US$ 10,000 towards funding the travel and related costs for the external experts and for the preparation of the final document. In the event that funds are not available, the Board agreed that the Director could, with the assistance of the Board, seek external funding.

54. In order to prepare the INSTRAW conceptual framework in time for the workshop and the 1999 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Board agreed on the following schedule: comments from Board members will be submitted to the Director no later than 20 May 1998; a final draft will be sent to Board members, for information only, by the end of July; the draft will be presented at the workshop in November; and the final publication will be presented to the Commission in March 1999.

55. The representative of UNIFEM presented a statement on behalf of the Director of UNIFEM, who was unable to attend the session. She informed the Board that UNIFEM was committed to a close working partnership with INSTRAW in order to work towards the common goal of promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. She mentioned several examples of past collaboration, which had proven to be very useful to both organizations, given their complementary roles. Finally, she highlighted her organization's interest in collaborating on the proposed research programme on engendering the political agenda, as a way to link the operational work of UNIFEM with the research work of INSTRAW.

56. In his statement, the representative of IOM further supported the need for strengthening collaboration between his organization and the organizations of the United Nations system, especially INSTRAW. Because of new trends in

migration that particularly affected women in temporary labour migration, he highlighted the importance of INSTRAW's proposed research on temporary labour migration to complement the operational capacity of IOM. Through such collaboration, important policy issues concerning the status of women migrants, as well as that of their families, could be revealed.

57. The representative of the regional commissions stressed the importance of strengthening inter-agency collaboration and pointed out that the regional commissions lacked research capacity and gender expertise. She informed the Board that the regional commissions had undertaken an explicit commitment to including a gender perspective in their work. Hence, gender mainstreaming of their programmes had been introduced. However, that alone did not meet the increasing need for improved gender-sensitive policies and good practices. She stressed that INSTRAW could play a critical role in that regard.

V. Proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 1998-1999

58. At its 4th and 5th meetings, under agenda item 7, the Board considered the proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The Board had before it the following documents: INSTRAW/BT/1998/R.4 and INSTRAW/BT/1998/CRP.2, 3 and 4.

59. The Director introduced the documents for the consideration of the Board of Trustees. She stated that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 aimed at responding to the research and training needs of women with respect to issues related to their advancement, as defined in the various international platforms. She noted that, given the financial limitations of the Institute, INSTRAW was able to formulate only a modest programme of work focused on two priority research components. She added that the formulation of the programme budget incorporated substantial reductions in staffing and operational costs. Furthermore, she informed the Board that effective implementation of the Institute's programme of work for the present biennium depended on the amount of contributions to the Institute's Trust Fund.

60. Tables 1 and 2 on the budgetary requirements for the policy-making organ and the Executive Direction and Management Unit were reviewed by the Board. The Director indicated that items introduced under the overall resource requirement for her unit included the seed money for holding an international dialogue meeting to share findings of gender research, as well as to identify gaps in interinstitutional collaboration. The meeting will be held in Europe, and funding will be pursued on the basis of a previous offer for sponsorship made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

61. The representative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) expressed his organization's interest in cooperating with INSTRAW on the research project dealing with temporary labour migration of women. He also congratulated the Director on the conceptualization of the proposed research project and reiterated IOM's intention of undertaking this programme as a joint activity. He declared that his organization was ready to allocate seed funds for the research, and expressed readiness to seek jointly with INSTRAW additional sources of external funding.

62. A Board member inquired about which sending countries were to be selected for the comparative analysis. The representative of IOM replied that the countries envisaged were Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, owing to the increased flow of female out-migration from these countries. He also indicated that it would be important to undertake comparative studies between the two countries, given the difference in the type of women workers migrating from them. He added that such studies were particularly relevant at the present time, when labour migration had increasingly become a movement from one part of the developing world to another.

63. The representative of UNIFEM stressed UNIFEM's readiness to work with INSTRAW on the proposed research programme on engendering the political agenda. UNIFEM supported the conceptual framework of the research project and was ready to cooperate fully with INSTRAW in that endeavour. In reply to a Board member who inquired about UNIFEM's financial contribution to the programme, the representative of UNIFEM pointed out that, since the budget had not been included in the proposal, the matter would need to be discussed at a later stage. However, she pointed that it would be necessary for both UNIFEM and INSTRAW to seek additional external funds for the programme.

64. The Board expressed its appreciation to the representatives of both UNIFEM and IOM for their interest in and readiness to cooperate with INSTRAW programmes.

65. Referring to document INSTRAW/BT/1998/CRP.4, the representative of the Secretary-General welcomed INSTRAW's proposed programme on labour migration. She recalled the resolution on violence against women migrant workers, adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session (resolution 42/3), in which the Commission requested INSTRAW to contribute

substantively to the discussions. She also pointed out that UNIFEM had a special Trust Fund devoted to violence against women and that INSTRAW could also explore terms of cooperation in that regard. The Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat also had several programmes in that area and was responsible for preparing the biennial report to the General Assembly on the subject. She assured the meeting that the Division would continue to collaborate with INSTRAW in that regard.

66. The Director informed the Board that the proposed subprogramme on developing a database on violence against women had been included in INSTRAW's programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999 at the request of Member States during the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Board members expressed their concern that this might be a duplication of the ongoing work of other United Nations agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations and research institutions. They proposed that INSTRAW integrate this item within its research programmes in such a way that it addressed different aspects of violence.

67. For example, in the subprogramme on engendering the political agenda, the research could focus on processes of developing policies related to various forms of violence against women. Similarly, in the subprogramme on temporary labour migration, data on forms of violence experienced by migrant women could be collected.

68. At the request of the Director, the Acting Administrative Officer presented document INSTRAW/BT/1998/CRP.2, in which the financial situation of INSTRAW was described in detail. She pointed out that the severe crisis confronting the Institute would undoubtedly affect its programmes and staffing resources.

69. Several Board members inquired about INSTRAW's mechanisms for providing feedback and accountability to donors. The Director explained that, in November of each year when the pledging conference for development activities was held at United Nations Headquarters, Member States made pledges to the INSTRAW Trust Fund, at which time such accountability could be provided. The question of accountability was also partially addressed during INSTRAW's briefing to donors during the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. Letters of acknowledgement and relevant public information materials were sent to donors periodically. More concrete and specific information required by the donors in respect of INSTRAW's programme and budget implementation, as well as any other inquiry, were provided upon request. She also informed the Board that earmarked contributions received for specific activities were duly accounted for, as required by donor sources.

70. A Board member recommended that INSTRAW continue to write to donors prior to the pledging conference, informing them of INSTRAW's ongoing and future activities. An overview of planned programmes, as well as progress reports of ongoing programmes, should be forwarded to traditional and potential donors, as a means of motivating and enhancing their financial support to the Institute. Another Board member suggested that due acknowledgment be given to donors in relevant public information material and/or publications, as appropriate.

71. The Board members reviewed the four research subprogrammes proposed in the programme budget: (1) international database on violence against women; (2) engendering the political agenda; (3) temporary labour migration of women; and (4) database on gender-training materials. The Director of INSTRAW took note of the Board's recommendations.

72. One member noted that, while the proposed research programme was important, there were other issues important to African women, which were not addressed by it. Women's health was one such issue, as well as other problems which women faced in their day-to-day lives.

73. Following the various comments made by the Board of Trustees, and taking into consideration their observations, the Director revised the substantive programmes and their budgetary requirements. She submitted, for consideration by the Board, the following reconfiguration of the programme of work and budget:

Summary of proposed programme of activities

Research and training: programme of activities

	Resources allocated (US$)
1. Research programme	
Subprogramme one: Engendering the political agenda	196 000
Subprogramme two: Temporary labour migration of women	161 200
Subprogramme three: Database on water resources management	15 000
Subprogramme four: Database on gender-training materials	15 000
Subtotal	**387 200**
2. Training programme	
Subprogramme one: Statistics and indicators on gender	51 000
Subprogramme two: Women, environmental management and sustainable development	20 000
Subtotal	**71 000**
3. Inter-agency activities	
Participation in relevant meetings; collaboration in relevant research and training activities	37 000
Total	**495 200**

74. The Director explained that in the revised work programme, studies on violence against women had been incorporated as components of the two proposed research subprogrammes. A new subprogramme had been included to enhance the continuing work of INSTRAW in the area of women and water resources management.

75. The Board proposed that the workshop on trafficking in women not be presented under the subprogramme on temporary labour migration of women.

76. Without further comment, the Board approved the new configuration of the work programme. Subprogrammes one (Engendering the political agenda) and two (Temporary labour migration of women) were to be the priority items on the research agenda of INSTRAW for the biennium.

77. The representative of the Secretary-General brought to the attention of the Board the fact that at the 1999 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, women and health would be one of the issues to be discussed. She also pointed out that the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, was organizing an Expert Group Meeting entitled "Women and health: mainstreaming the gender perspective into the health sector". The meeting would be held in Tunisia from 28 September to 2 October 1998. She pointed out the importance of INSTRAW's participation in the meeting, especially in the light of the Board's concern for women's health.

78. The Director welcomed the comments and suggestions made by the representative of the Secretary-General in the areas of water and health. She added that the subprogramme on engendering the political agenda could include the issue of women and health as opposed to the issue of family fragmentation/separation due to the migration of women or men. A Board member welcomed the suggestion that INSTRAW contribute substantially to the item on health at the 1999 session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Several Board members also welcomed the inclusion of the girl child in the subprogramme on engendering the political agenda.

79. The Director explained that the research programme on water resources would give priority to the African region. The representative of the regional commissions informed the Board of the meeting on gender mainstreaming strategies and water resources being organized by the Division of Natural Resources and the Women's Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The meeting was scheduled to take place in late June 1998. She said that ECLAC was keen to have INSTRAW actively participate in the meeting and would cover the travel costs involved.

80. One Board member recommended that INSTRAW seek the necessary advice from the relevant United Nations divisions so that economy class would apply for all travel undertaken at the expense of the Institute. She encouraged other members to adopt that modality as a means of contributing to the reduction of the overall travel costs of the Institute.

81. The representative of the regional commissions informed the Board that her organization had been providing economy travel for the past several years. She also informed the Board that ECLAC had substantially reduced hospitality and related expenditures.

82. The Executive Officer of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat informed the Board that in some instances the Secretariat authorized participants in official meetings to pre-pay their own tickets, bearing in mind the United Nations standards for the most direct and economical means of travel.

83. The Director of the Institute reiterated the Institute's need to reduce its budgetary requirements wherever feasible. In that regard, she enquired whether a request could be made to the Secretariat to waive the overhead costs paid by INSTRAW for support services. The Executive Officer of

the Department of Economic and Social Affairs reported that she had brought the matter to the attention of the Controller for his consideration. She later reported on her consultations with him and stated that under the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations he was unable to grant the request.

84. A Board member recommended that the terms of reference for the post of Chief of the Information, Communication and Documentation Unit (P-4) be redefined to respond to the interdisciplinary functions required in the areas of research and public information. In addition, the Board decided that priority be given to the post of a Senior Research Officer (P-5) rather than to the post of Chief of the Information, Communication and Documentation Unit since a senior Professional officer was needed to assist the Director in the execution of supervisory and substantive programme functions.

85. In view of that situation, the Board urged that the post be filled as soon as possible. It was also suggested that INSTRAW's overall approach towards identifying researchers be focused on multidisciplinary skills rather than on specific areas of expertise.

86. The Director reminded the Board that, given the Institute's budgetary limitations for staffing costs, it would not be possible to fill the P-5 post until January 1999. She added that, as an interim measure, INSTRAW would instead engage consultants to assist in the substantive areas. Such an option, however, would not provide INSTRAW with senior staff to discharge the necessary managerial and supervisory functions at headquarters while she was on mission.

87. The representative of the Secretary-General agreed that the engagement of consultants was a suitable and practical option as an interim measure until such time as the P-5 post was filled. She reiterated that consultants could not discharge supervisory functions and clarified that the time required for completing the recruitment process could take several months. Given INSTRAW's needs and its severe shortage of staff, the representative of the Secretary-General recalled the recommendation made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services on INSTRAW's P-4 post assigned to the Liaison Office in New York. She suggested that the Board might wish to reconsider the matter in the context of the overall staffing needs of the Institute.

88. One Board member stated that the question of the Liaison Office had been addressed in the report of the Strategic Planning Committee. The Committee had stated that a Liaison Office for INSTRAW in New York was essential to ensure its visibility and to facilitate inter-agency collaborative functions in the United Nations.

89. The Board approved the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, as amended. Recognizing the difficulties imposed on INSTRAW by its current financial situation and limitations in its human resources, the Board granted the Director of INSTRAW flexibility in the administration of the human and financial resources of the Institute, as well as in the implementation of its programmes.

VI. Other issues of relevance to the functioning of the Institute

90. At its 6th meeting, under agenda item 8, on other issues of relevance to the functioning of the Institute, the Board had before it documents INSTRAW/BT/1998/CRP.5 and Add.1 and 2.

91. The first issue considered under this agenda item was networking and the INSTRAW focal points. The Associate Social Affairs Officer of INSTRAW introduced the document. She said that in response to a request made by the Board of Trustees at its seventeenth session, the Institute had carried out an appraisal of its relationship with focal points, as contained in the above-mentioned document. The document indicated possible factors contributing to the weakness of the current relationship, which included: (a) insufficient information to Governments as to the criteria to be used in nominating focal points; (b) lack of clear guidelines to focal points concerning their function; and (c) the Institute's lack of financial and human resources for actively undertaking collaborative activities with the focal points.

92. To remedy this situation, the Institute proposed several steps, namely: (a) providing clear guidelines as to the functions of the focal points; (b) establishing more dynamic communication between the Institute and the focal points; (c) promoting the involvement of the focal points in the research and training activities of each biennial work programme; (d) instituting closer monitoring of focal point activities; (e) establishing a fixed term of four years, with the possibility of renewal, for organizations identified as focal points; (f) the systematic translation of the Institute's publications into English, French and Spanish, if not other languages; and (g) limiting the designation of official focal points to one per country.

93. A discussion then ensued on these issues and suggestions. One Board member reiterated the usefulness of regional meetings of focal points as proposed in the

document under review. It was also suggested that, in order to reduce mailing costs, rather than sending all the publications to focal points, only a list of publications be sent from which certain publications could be ordered.

94. It was agreed by the Board that a fixed-term appointment of four years should be established for focal points, after which their reappointment could be reconsidered. The Institute was requested to draw up guidelines for such a review. The Board agreed that all seven institutions nominated, as contained in documents INSTRAW/BT/1998/CRP.5/Add.1 and 2, should be approved for appointment as focal points for a fixed term of four years. No decision was reached on the issue of having multiple focal points in a country. At the same time, the Board directed INSTRAW to inform the focal points of the new rules, and to ask them if they were interested in continuing to act as focal points.

95. The Board also suggested that INSTRAW update its directory of focal points. Several Board members noted that some of the focal points on the list no longer existed, or had been absorbed by other agencies. The Board also requested that it continue to be informed of the Institute's activities with focal points.

96. A Board member presented the conclusions of the Ad Hoc Working Group, which was constituted to look into ways by which INSTRAW could secure the necessary financial and human resources needed to perform its main functions, namely producing quality gender research and training. The Board approved the conclusions of the Group and made the following recommendations:

At the donor level

(a) Establish a list of previous donors and reactivate links with them, be they States, intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations, foundations or private donors;

(b) Prepare a list of potential donors, then:

(i) Determine research fields of common interest within the framework of the Beijing Platform for Action;

(ii) Prepare position papers on the topics agreed upon; and further develop the position papers, once approved by potential donors, into fully fledged research proposals;

(c) Seek funding to hire a fund-raising expert.

At the focal point level

(a) Redefine the role of focal points and make sure that they contribute to the visibility of INSTRAW worldwide;

(b) Review the list of focal points and assess their effectiveness;

(c) Establish a list of important research institutes, on the basis of adequate geographical distribution, and encourage them to have their respective Governments submit their names as potential focal points for INSTRAW. Such a measure would make it possible for INSTRAW to widen its scope of activities, without necessarily increasing its expenditures, and enhance its international dimension.

At the Board of Trustees level

(a) Board members, to the extent possible, should help make INSTRAW more visible and more marketable. In that respect, Board members should play an intermediary role in securing funds for specific and well-defined activities, be they research projects, training programmes or workshops;

(b) Board members should maintain continuous contact with the Director of the Institute throughout the year. The Director could possibly keep Board members abreast of the latest developments through a quarterly one-page outline of the Institute's activities and concerns.

At the human resource level

(a) Ensure that the structure of the staffing table of INSTRAW is in line with the new strategy and evolving needs of the Institute;

(b) Establish, in coordination with other United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations and relevant focal points, a list of competent consultants in various fields of specialization and different parts of the world, which could be resorted to when staffing research projects and/or training programmes.

97. During the discussion following the presentation of the conclusions of the Ad Hoc Working Group, several issues were raised. One of them concerned the need for two-way feedback of information regarding the research priorities at the regional and national levels. Although there was a general consensus that the Beijing Platform for Action outlined basic areas of priority, the members of the Board agreed that they, in addition to the focal points and other organizations of the United Nations system, could assist the Institute in compiling such priorities for use in the

formulation of future biennial work programmes. It was also suggested that the forthcoming inter-agency workshop be used to identify the research priorities of INSTRAW.

98. A Board member, referring to the opening statement of the representative of the Secretary-General, raised the question of the status of INSTRAW. On behalf of the Board, she read out the following statement, presenting the Board's position on the future of the Institute:

> "The Board of Trustees of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), at its eighteenth session, stresses the importance of the autonomous status of the Institute, as is set out in article I of its Statute.
>
> "The Board notes with satisfaction the recent appointment of a Director for the Institute for a two-year period. Under her direction, it is expected that the visibility of INSTRAW in United Nations affairs will improve through its research and training activities. Together with the Board, the Director is also expected to undertake fund-raising activities in order to increase the income of INSTRAW's Trust Fund.
>
> "The Director has also made the commitment to actively encourage and promote inter-agency collaboration in carrying out the mandate of INSTRAW.
>
> "Given this situation, the Board of Trustees reiterates its position that the autonomous status of INSTRAW should be maintained, and would call upon the Economic and Social Council to recommend this for adoption by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session."

99. The President of the INSTRAW Staff Association read out a statement to the Board in which the staff expressed its concern about the Institute's financial crisis, which seriously impeded the future work of the Institute and required a reduction in the staffing structure. The staff appealed to the Board to assist, in whatever way possible, in strengthening the resource base of the Institute, and to support any efforts that might allow those staff members who would be released to have their needs addressed, including compensation. The President of the Staff Association informed the Board of meetings with the representative of the Secretary-General and the Executive Officer of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and thanked them for their concern and their availability for discussion with the staff.

100. The Board expressed its concern and empathy for the situation of staff members and requested the representative of the Secretariat to take note of the requests. Some Board members suggested writing to the Secretariat to convey the concerns of the staff. Others suggested that those staff members affected by the reduction be informed immediately after the closing of the Board's eighteenth session. The representative of the Secretary-General stated that she would convey the concerns of both the Board and the staff to the Secretary-General and other relevant officials, including the question of the payment of compensation to the staff members concerned. The Director thanked INSTRAW staff for their devoted and committed work, despite the imminent staff reduction. The Board decided that the statement of the INSTRAW Staff Association should be included in the report on its eighteenth session.

101. The representative of the Secretary-General subsequently reported that, following consultations with the Office of Human Resources Management and the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, it was agreed that the staff concerned who had served the Institute for over five years under the 100 series, and who were never considered for a career appointment, would be entitled to receive compensation, upon expiration of contract, at the rate of one month's salary for each two years of completed service. She further stated, following discussions with the Director and the Controller, that, were the Board of Trustees to decide that the staff encumbering the seven or eight posts slated for abolition should receive compensation, the United Nations Controller would authorize covering the financial implications from the United Nations share of programme support, on the understanding that the amount involved would be recovered as soon as INSTRAW was in a viable financial position.

102. The President of the Staff Association expressed her appreciation on behalf of all the staff for the information provided by the representative of the Secretary-General regarding the decision of the Office of Human Resources Management, the Office of Legal Affairs and the United Nations Controller to grant compensation to the separating staff under the 100 series who had completed five years of service. She stated that she was deeply touched by the prompt response.

103. The ex officio member of the Board representing the host country made a brief statement, in which she reiterated her Government's interest in collaborating with INSTRAW. She informed the Board of the Government's intentions to pay the pending amount due from the monthly contributions to INSTRAW, as stipulated in the agreement with the host country, and mentioned that payment would be forthcoming.

104. There was general consensus among the Board that the next Strategic Planning Committee meeting could be held after the conclusion of the Board's nineteenth session. The Board decided that its nineteenth session should be held from 8 to 12 February 1999.

VII. Organization of the session

A. Opening and duration of the session

105. The eighteenth session of the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women was held at the Institute's headquarters in Santo Domingo from 27 April to 1 May 1998. The Board held eight meetings.

106. The session was opened by the President of the Board, Selma Acuner (Turkey). She welcomed all the Board members, especially the new members, Zakia Bouaziz (Tunisia), Norica Nicolai (Romania), Glenda Simms (Jamaica) and Amaryllis Torres (Philippines), as well as the ex officio members, the observers representing member States and the representatives of organizations within and outside the United Nations system. The President also welcomed Eduardo Latorre, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic and Gladys Gutierrez, Secretary of State of the Dominican Republic, who was the ex officio member of the Board of Trustees representing the host country. She congratulated the recently appointed Director and expressed confidence that she would make a significant contribution to strengthening the visibility of INSTRAW. On behalf of the Board, the President thanked Martha Dueñas Loza, the former Acting Director, for her work. She also expressed appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and special representative of the Secretary-General to the INSTRAW Board of Trustees, Mr. Nitin Desai, and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Ms. Angela King, for their most valuable support to INSTRAW, the Board of Trustees, and to herself, during her tenure as the President.

107. In her opening remarks, the President of the Board congratulated Ms. Yakin Ertürk on her appointment as Director of INSTRAW. She was confident that Ms. Ertürk would make a major contribution to strengthening the functioning of the Institute, in view of her outstanding credentials and vast experience in the field of research and training on women's issues. On behalf of the Board, she expressed gratitude to the host country for its continued support.

108. The President noted that in previous years, INSTRAW had functioned despite institutional and financial constraints and uncertainties. She pointed out that at its current session the Board would address issues critical to the Institute, as pledges from Member States had decreased severely. The impact of the decrease could seriously affect the mandate and programmes of INSTRAW. However, she expressed confidence in the ability of the Institute, the Board of Trustees, and the United Nations Secretariat to overcome the current situation. She thanked INSTRAW staff for their hard work and commitment throughout the year, and personally thanked all the Board members, particularly the Vice-President. She concluded by stating that the task of changing the world with a gender perspective was a complex one, and expressed confidence that INSTRAW, with its new approach on transformatory empowerment, would provide workable and substantial solutions to overcoming the obstacles.

109. The representative of the Secretary-General, in her opening remarks, extended warm greetings and best wishes from the Secretary-General and his special representative, Mr. Nitin Desai, to the Board of Trustees. She congratulated the recently appointed Director of INSTRAW and pointed out that much had been accomplished in a short time, including preparing documentation for the Board, attending the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and forging stronger links with many other United Nations institutions and organizations dealing with gender issues, among them UNIFEM and the Division for the Advancement of Women. The representative of the Secretary-General expressed gratitude to the host country for its continuing support of the Institute.

110. The representative of the Secretary-General also stated that the Beijing Platform for Action, the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council , the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Administrative Committee of Coordination (ACC) statement on gender equality and mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations system were major milestones for the realization of the goals of gender equality. Despite all the achievements in the appointment of women to high-level posts both within and outside the United Nations system, there was a critical need for identifying important links between women and various sectors through empirical findings. She pointed out that INSTRAW needed to launch new concepts and canvass existing research capacity within and outside the United Nations system by providing intellectual support to Member States and international organizations in tackling mainstreaming issues and pursuing development and peacemaking and peacekeeping initiatives. Drawing on policy priorities set

forth in the Platform for Action, in which INSTRAW was requested to identify types of research to be given priority, strengthen national capabilities to carry out gender research, develop networks of research institutions and identify types of education needed, the Institute was in a position to influence gender-related research and training issues. She reiterated her support and that of the staff of the Division for the Advancement of Women to INSTRAW. She pointed out that consultations had been initiated with the Director of INSTRAW, UNIFEM and other entities in the context of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality.

111. Referring to the financial situation of INSTRAW, she expressed the Secretary-General's deep concern about the declining resource base of the Institute and the low level of voluntary contributions to the Institute's Trust Fund. She drew the Board's attention to article VI (5) of the Statute of INSTRAW and the financial regulations and rules which prohibited transfers of funds between sources having no programmatic affinity, as well as between regular budget and extrabudgetary resources. With regard to the difficult financial situation of INSTRAW, she mentioned that it could, in part, be attributed to the unresolved issue of a possible merger of INSTRAW and UNIFEM. She further explained that the major part of the reform and renewal process in the United Nations Secretariat had been completed. She expressed hope that the Board would make a clear recommendation to the Economic and Social Council on the status of INSTRAW so that the issue of the merger could finally be settled by the Council and the General Assembly. With regard to the financial situation, she said that the special representative of the Secretary-General had arranged for the Executive Officer of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, who was responsible for backstopping INSTRAW in administrative, personnel and budgetary matters, to attend the present session at the Department's expense.

112. In conclusion, the representative of the Secretary-General indicated that essential conditions must be met if INSTRAW was to discharge its responsibilities and mandate effectively and fully: INSTRAW should have the full support of the Board of Trustees in devising fund-raising strategies and programmes; INSTRAW should operate within the system-wide implementation of the Platform for Action and in full cooperation with UNIFEM, the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations agencies and entities; the Institute should produce quality research programmes and effective training programmes; and the necessary financial resources must be provided by Member States in full and in a timely manner.

113. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Government of the Dominican Republic, welcomed all the Board members, and said that his Government highly valued INSTRAW's presence in the country. He pointed out that the central role played by the Institute in improving the status and condition of women demanded greater support from Governments in order to develop its activities effectively. The Dominican Republic assumed the challenge of strengthening its links with INSTRAW in the hope that the Institute's work could result in actions that would allow women, particularly those in developing countries, to overcome the problems of exclusion and marginalization to which they had been subjected.

114. The representative of the host country and ex officio member of the Board also welcomed the members of the Board. She then requested a minute of silence in homage to Bella Abzug, whom she described as a staunch supporter of women's rights and gender equity. Noting the item on the agenda concerning INSTRAW's strategy for the new millennium, she pointed out that the challenges ahead included eradicating women's poverty, reducing maternal mortality, reviewing the issue of forced migrations and promoting the construction of true democracy based on gender equality. She concluded by expressing the Dominican Government's willingness to support INSTRAW and its work.

115. On behalf of INSTRAW and its staff, the Director welcomed the members of the Board to its eighteenth session, at which the new biennial programme would be adopted. She pointed out that the Secretary-General had placed great stress on the importance of examining and consolidating research institutions within the United Nations system, where INSTRAW needed to be actively involved in order to ensure the preservation of its unique mandate for research on women and gender issues. The Director stated that INSTRAW, as an institute dedicated to the advancement of women through research and training, was at a crossroads in which it must respond to the changing world by revising its theoretical, methodological and operational activities, as recommended by the Board of Trustees at its seventeenth session, bearing in mind the concerns underlying the proposed United Nations reform with regard to the research institutes.

116. The Director emphasized that INSTRAW was not the only institution within the United Nations that faced financial difficulties. The Secretary-General in his reform proposal mentioned the severe financial problems faced by research institutes, which consequently made it difficult for them to maintain consistent output. In conclusion, the Director reiterated her confidence that together, INSTRAW

staff, Board members and the United Nations Secretariat could identify concrete measures that would enable the Institute to overcome the problems emanating from its eroding financial base.

B. Attendance

117. The following members of the Board attended the session: Selma Acuner (Turkey) Ihsan Abdalla Algabshawi (Sudan), Esther Ashton (Bolivia), Zakia Bouaziz (Tunisia), Maria Jonas (Austria), Mona Chemali Khalaf (Lebanon), Norica Nicolai (Romania), Els Postel-Coster (Netherlands), Glenda Simms (Jamaica) and Amaryllis Torres (Philippines).

118. The following ex officio members of the Board also attended: the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and representative of the Secretary-General; the representative of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), representing all the regional commissions; the representative of the host country (Dominican Republic); and the Director of INSTRAW. Also present were the representatives of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Executive Officer of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat was present.

C. Election of officers

119. At the 1st meeting, in accordance with rule 7 of its rules of procedure, the Board elected the following officers by acclamation:

President: Esther Ashton (Bolivia)

Vice-President: Maria Jonas (Austria)

Rapporteur: Amaryllis Torres (Philippines)

120. The newly elected President thanked the members of the Board for her election and expressed her commitment to fulfilling expectations in guiding the discussions of the eighteenth session. She pointed out the particular importance of the session, given the current financial situation of the Institute and the need to review and approve its programme of work and budget for the biennium 1998-1999. She congratulated the Director for the positive work that had been done, despite the short time since her appointment, and thanked the former Acting Director for her three years at INSTRAW. In conclusion, she expressed the hope that the eighteenth session of the Board would result in favourable recommendations and conclusions for INSTRAW.

D. Agenda

121. At the 1st meeting, the Board adopted its provisional agenda (INSTRAW/BT/1998/R.1/Rev.1), as orally amended, by consensus. The agenda read as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Election of officers.
4. Report of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting.
5. Progress report on the activities of INSTRAW for 1997.
6. INSTRAW strategy for the new millennium.
7. Proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 1998-1999.
8. Other issues of relevance to the functioning of INSTRAW.
9. Adoption of the report of the Board on its eighteenth session.
10. Closure of the eighteenth session of the Board of Trustees.

122. With regard to the organization of work, the President made various proposals related to the distribution of documents and indicated that interventions by Board members and other participants should be as concise as possible.

E. Adoption of the report of the Board on its eighteenth session

123. At the 7th and 8th meetings, on 1 May 1998, the Board adopted the report on its eighteenth session (INSTRAW/BT/1998/R.5 and Add.1-5), together with a working paper on matters to be brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council.

Annex

Statement of the INSTRAW Staff Association at the eighteenth session of the Board of Trustees

The Staff Association of INSTRAW would like to bring to the attention of the Board of Trustees its concern about the financial crises of the Institute and the consequent need for staff reduction measures that have been announced by INSTRAW's Director.

The principal concern of the Staff Association, of course, is that the queries and rights of the staff members that may have to be released as of 30 June 1998 be given due consideration by the Institute and the United Nations system as a whole.

The main matters of concern consist of the following: that withdrawal pension benefits be expedited; that the Director of the Institute appeal to the Secretariat of the United Nations so that other United Nations agencies give priority to INSTRAW staff that will be released when filling vacancies; that affected staff members, in particular the internationally recruited staff, be notified at the latest by 15 May 1998, so that they may make personal arrangements, including provisions regarding accumulated vacations and compensation time; that the Executive Office of the Institute in New York provide adequate support and assistance in responding to the collective and individual concerns ensuing from this situation. These concerns have been brought to the attention of the Director, who has expressed an interest and commitment in finding the most adequate solutions possible.

In 1996, when a number of staff members were released from the Institute owing to the abolition of posts, attempts were made by INSTRAW's former Acting Director and the Staff Bureau – with the support of recommendations from the Board of Trustees – to seek compensation for those staff members. The requests were not granted. The staff of INSTRAW feels particularly concerned that the staff members affected may not receive any compensation despite the fact that the current staff has been with the Institute for an average of 11 years.

The Staff Association would like to appeal to the Board of Trustees to convey its concerns to the Secretariat of the United Nations and to request that other forms of compensation be explored – on humanitarian grounds – for the staff members that may be released.

The Staff Association understands that the reduction exercise of INSTRAW's staff at a time when the Institute's programme of work needs to be implemented with the utmost efficiency and quality will invariably imply the hiring of temporary assistance. Considering the valuable expertise acquired by the staff during many years of work at the Institute, the Staff Association requests that – to the extent possible – released staff of INSTRAW be considered for temporary engagements.

While the Staff Association is aware that the staff reduction measures result from the severe financial crisis affecting the Institute, it is a major concern that these measures will necessarily impose on the remaining staff a great deal more responsibility and a heavier workload. Despite their best efforts, the staff might not succeed in meeting all the requirements for the implementation of the proposed programme of work.

The Staff Association of INSTRAW understands the scarce alternatives available to the Institute at this moment. However, it trusts that, as the policy-making organ of the Institute, the Board of Trustees, on the one hand, and the Secretariat of the United Nations, on the other, will provide the support necessary for meeting the financial needs of the Institute and, within that context, in ensuring that the needs of the separating staff be duly addressed.

Having seen the Institute grow and make important contributions in the area of research and training on women and gender issues, the Staff Association feels particularly saddened by the current financial situation and trusts that the Secretariat will give the support necessary to ensure its continuity and revitalization for the benefit of women worldwide.